



**Letter from Capt. His Highness Maharaja Manikya
Sir Bir Bikram Kishore Deb Barman Bahadur,
K.C.S.I., Maharaja of Tripura, to His Excellency
The Most Honourable the Marquess of Linlithgow,
P.C., Kt., G.M.S.I., G.M.I.E., O.B.E., D.L., T.D.,
Viceroy of India, Simla, dated the 10th July, 1939,
on the subject of accession of Tripura State to the
Federation of India.**

TRIPURA STATE

CAMP.

SAVOY HOTEL.

London, the 10th July, 1939,

MY ESTEEMED FRIEND,

I address Your Excellency with reference to Your Excellency's letter of the 27th January, 1939, on the subject of accession of my State to the All-India Federation as contemplated in the Government of India Act of 1935.

2. Your Excellency has been pleased to enquire whether I am prepared to execute an Instrument of Accession on behalf of the Tripura State within the terms indicated in documents (1) and (2) annexed to the letter under reply, and I may say that I am grateful for the time that Your Excellency has graciously allowed and for the discretion that Your Excellency has very kindly left to me in arriving at a decision in a matter of such vital importance.

3. I can assure Your Excellency that I have given the question my most serious and earnest consideration in view of the grave responsibility that lies on me as the mouthpiece of my State, my Dynasty, and my people and of the solemn obligations that I owe to the Crown as well as to India as a whole, and I may be permitted to state frankly that my anxiety has been all the greater as the terms offered now are desired to be regarded in all essentials incapable of further relaxation.

4. For some time past the political atmosphere in India has been changing and there is now a tendency on the part of dominant political parties in British India to regard the Ruling Princes as unwelcome partners in the Federation, and even to have recourse to coercive steps to interfere with the status, sovereignty and integrity of the States. Your Excellency will kindly pardon me if I say that this changed aspect of things cannot but affect the ardour and enthusiasm with which the idea of an All-India Federation was originally received by the Princely Order.

5. I hope Your Excellency will understand the anxious concern of the Ruling Dynasties in formulating a decision under the changed circumstances. Alive as every Ruler has to be to the dangers that stare his State in the face, he naturally turns to Your Excellency for protection and if he evinces a desire to have his position adequately safeguarded I can assure Your Excellency that it is purely from the instinct of self-preservation.

6. I have, in common perhaps with my brother Princes, tried to get all available advice to come to a proper decision and to have the position of my State carefully scrutinised in the light of the terms offered. I may assure Your Excellency that my intention has been not only to secure the integrity of my State but to be of every assistance in the realisation of the ideal of an All-India Federation. Two important conferences of Ruling Princes and Ministers, recently held, have carefully examined the

documents received with Your Excellency's letter and have come to the conclusion that some of the terms are detrimental to the interests of Indian States. I refer to the reports of the Hydari Committee and the Gwalior Conference of Ministers which I have had the advantage of examining and which, I believe, are already before Your Excellency. I may be permitted to state that I find myself in general agreement with the views expressed in these reports and while willing to urge these views on my own behalf, I do not think I need repeat them here. Eager as I am, however, to join the Federation I would crave Your Excellency's indulgence to enumerate below certain features in particular in the scheme now proposed which call for modification to make it fully acceptable.

7 (a). The provisions proposed for the protection of the rights of my State and the rights and dignity of the Ruler thereof, in the federal sphere as well as outside it, are not adequate and satisfactory. It has always been assumed that the internal autonomy of the units within the Federation would be respected. The legal structure of Federation is directed to this end and exists as much to protect the units within their fields as to give authority to the Centre in its own field. Thus, for example, in answer to Query No. 7000, the then Secretary of State the Right Hon'ble Sir Samuel Hoare, stated : " The whole basis of our Federal Scheme is that we do not interfere in the internal management of the States except to the extent that they have surrendered powers to the Federal Government." When in the Joint Select Committee, the then Secretary of State was asked what was meant by the phrase "Protection of the rights of any Indian States," he replied "there is a point here that does directly concern the Provinces. The kind of case we had in mind was the need for intervention : supposing within a Province, a movement was growing up, such as the kind of movement of which we have had examples, in which large bodies of a particular community or a particular mode of thought march in from the Province into a neighbouring State and stir up trouble in the State. In cases of that kind we felt there ought to be power to prevent such movement of that kind, endangering the stability of an Indian State." It has been an unfortunate experience that in certain recent instances, the protection which the Indian States were encouraged to expect at the hands of the neighbouring units, under the assurances quoted above, was not forthcoming in spite of the special responsibilities laid upon the Provincial Governors in that behalf under section 52(1) (f) of the Government of India Act, corresponding to the special responsibilities of the Governor-General under section 12 (1) (g). It is not, therefore, considered safe to rely upon the special responsibilities of the Governor-General under section 12 (1) (g) of the Act as the sole means of protection of the rights of an Indian State and of the rights and dignity of its Ruler.

(b). As regards the question of administration of Federal laws and the proposed agreement under section 125 of the Act, I may be permitted to say that this section was specifically incorporated at the instance of the States to enable them to reserve executive authority and thus to differentiate between the States and the Provinces. The arrangements for the administration of Federal laws proposed under the Revised Draft Instrument were not previously discussed with the States and are unsatisfactory in so far as they are not in consonance with the terms of that section. The principle of parity with the Provinces now urged, though not unreasonable at first sight, may not be altogether helpful as there is no knowing what powers of administration will be allowed to the Provinces by the Centre from time to time. I would, therefore,

urge that the entries in the Federal list in respect of which executive administration is to be entrusted to my State be specifically mentioned in the proposed agreement.

(c). The provisions of the scheme affecting the economic and financial position of my State appeared to me unsatisfactory even in the original Draft Instrument of Accession as was indicated in the limitations suggested by me thereto. Many of these limitations—general and specific—have now been disallowed. Changes of a fundamental character have, moreover, been introduced by the proposed amendment of entries 19 and 44 of the Federal Legislative List and section 297 of the Act which may prejudicially affect the financial position of my State.

The proposal for the stabilisation of the conditions and amounts of the income derived from customs duties by the State on the basis of the conditions and figures for the year 1936-37 is likely to have a far reaching adverse effect on its revenues.

A substantial portion of the income of my State is derived from land customs duties. In an undeveloped and growing State restrictions have often to be put upon export and import and rates of duty altered for special reasons. The stabilisation of the standard of 1936-37 therefore cannot but prove to be highly injurious to the interests of my State.

I may be permitted to refer, by way of illustration, to an export duty on paddy and rice imposed in my State for a special purpose with effect from 1937-38. The cultivated area in the State generally fringes its frontiers and there is at present a lack of suitable communications with the interior which stands in the way of proper distribution of agricultural produce throughout the State. These circumstances operate to provide an artificial stimulus to export to the detriment of the interests of the people, including the producers themselves who are very often at the mercy of outside traders. For the purpose of preventing uneconomic exploitation and of financing the opening out of the country by road development, my Durbar imposed this duty on rice and paddy exported for trade purposes only, and earmarked the total amount thereof, which is fairly substantial, for road making. Road development work must considerably suffer if this income is lost to the State.

(d). In regard to development of mines and oilfields, the acceptance of entry 36 specially in respect of oil and coal, has been insisted on. Both these minerals exist in the State and it is expected that steps for working out oil at least will be fully initiated in the near future. Your Excellency will, I trust, realise that to accept entry 36 would be to subordinate the development of my State, so far as these commodities are concerned, to any general policy of the Federal Government. I should not wonder if this leads to restriction of development which cannot but materially injure my State. A restrictive policy which may be justifiable under conditions prevailing in British India, where development of certain mineral resources has perhaps reached its peak, may prove altogether unsuitable and harmful to this State. I, therefore, hope that my State will be allowed not to federate on entry 36 so as to be free to develop its mineral resources on its own lines.

(e). In this connection I would also urge that acceptance of entry 35 regarding regulation of labour and safety in mines and oilfields should be subject to the limitation previously suggested by me. My principal reason is that in the present backward condition of the State any labour legislation, other than that

regarding safety, which may be desirable in the circumstances of British India may prove unsuitable in our case. Such legislation may also produce undesirable repercussions on other forms of labour not covered by entry 35.

(f). I may also mention that I attach much importance to the following limitation in respect of entry 14 regarding geological survey—"Federal Legislation under this item shall not affect the right of the State to conduct geological survey independently of Federal authorities."

(g). As regards entry 29 about arms and ammunition, the circumstances in my State are somewhat peculiar, as possession of firearms is often a necessity for protection of crops and lives from wild animals. Easy conditions of possession are therefore called for and I trust Your Excellency will agree that in this matter the State is the proper judge. It cannot at the same time be said that the State Arms Act proved inadequate as regards control even in trying circumstances. It was for this reason that I urged the maintenance of the *status quo* in my first letter. The extent of limitation now suggested is altogether insufficient and must occasion great difficulty if not reconsidered.

8. I fervently hope that Your Excellency will appreciate the reasons that have stood in the way of my accepting unconditionally the terms now offered. It is needless for me to repeat that my attitude is due solely to my anxiety to safeguard the interests of my State and the welfare of my people and I trust that ways and means may yet be found to remove, by suitable modification of the scheme, the doubts, as indicated above, that I still entertain in signifying my readiness to accede to the proposed Federation.

I remain,
with much consideration,
Your Excellency's sincere friend,

B. B. K. MANIKYA,

Maharaja Manikya of Tripura.

His Excellency the most Honourable

The Marquess of Linlithgow

P.C., K.T., G.M.S.I., G.M.I.E., D.L., T.D.,

Viceroy of India, Simla.

